**THE PASSIVE VOICE**

“UNDERSTAND GRAMMAR RULES YOU MUST” WAS SAID BY YODA

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**Definition**

It is not wrong to use the passive voice. It is just usually frowned upon because it is pretty hard to use correctly. It all depends on what your intention in the sentence is.

**Grade Level**

Grade 12 Academic. The correct usage of the passive voice is a higher-level grammar concept more suited for higher grades simply because it is based mostly on stylistic choices of manipulating sentence structure.

**Common Errors & Corrections**

Lack of agency

Lack of clarity of opinion

**Activity (Hook)**

1. Display an excerpt of George Orwell’s “swindles and perversions” essay (FIG 1) to the class and explain his idea about the concept of obscuring blame by using the passive voice.
2. Show a quick sound byte (quote/clip) of a corporation spokesperson or government official using the passive voice to obscure the blame (FIG 2). For example, a BP oil official stating, “mistakes were made”. Ask students why they think this obscures the blame.
3. Have students separate into pairs. Distribute current newspapers to each pair.
4. Ask students to find as many examples of this usage of the passive voice as possible and write them on the provided organiser (FIG 3) in column 1.
5. Have students transform the passive sentences into active sentences by adding a specific agent (with “by”) and to put their answers in column 2.
6. Take up the sheet as a group and explain the concept of active vs. passive voice and the construction using to be + passive participle to form passive sentences.

**Resources**

No Author. (2010). Passive Voice. Retrieved from <http://writingcenter>.unc.edu/resources/handouts-demos/citation/passive-voice

Orwell, George. *Politics and the English Language*. (1946).

Strunk and White. *The Elements of Style*. Third edition. (1979). Pages 18-19